

CIA/OGCR /PN 61.2684/75 ITEM 003 UNCLASSIFIED--PRC CITY BRIEF K'UN-MING

CIA JUL75

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ITEM 003

PRC CITY BRIEF

K'un-ming 昆明



CIA/OGCR/GD
PN 61.2684/75
July 1975

K'UN-MING

(pronounced kun-ming)

Chinese romanized system
of spelling:

Kunming

Location:

25°04'N 102°41'E
(approx. latitude of
Florida Keys)

Elevation:

6,200 feet above sea level

Population:

1.5 million in municipality
(includes urban and rural
areas)

Climate:

	<u>Jan</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Oct</u>
Mean daily maximum temperature (°F)	61	76	77	70
Mean daily minimum temperature (°F)	37	51	62	53
Mean number of days with precipitation	2	5	19	12
Mean monthly precipitation (inches)	.4	.8	8.8	3.0

K'UN-MING

General

K'un-ming, the capital of Yunnan Province, is a regionally important manufacturing center and a major transportation center of Southwest China. Although the city traditionally was one of China's more isolated and backward provincial capitals, the growing importance of the southwestern provinces since the late 1930s has spurred growth; and the K'un-ming Municipality (including rural areas and satellite towns) now has a population approaching 1.5 million. The city is the focus of transportation routes and communications in Yunnan, and it is served by both the Burma Road of World War II fame and the old French Indochina Rail Line. Recently constructed rail lines now connect K'un-ming to the Szechwan Basin to the north and to the lower Yangtze and southern China regions to the east via a line through Kweichow Province. Industrialization has been aided by a mineral-rich hinterland (including important deposits of coal, iron ore, and copper) and the city's factories produce a wide range of industrial and consumer goods. K'un-ming also serves as the political and military center of Yunnan, and in the city and its environs are located the province's major cultural and educational institutions.

K'un-ming lies on a flat, fertile plain at an elevation of 6,200 feet in the center of the Yunnan Plateau. The city is encircled by mountains to the north, west, and east, and a large lake, the Tien-ch'ih, adjoins the southwestern edge of the city. K'un-ming is often termed the city of eternal spring because of its temperate weather and perpetually blooming flowers. Its short winters are sunny and dry with daytime temperatures in the low 60's, dropping at night to near 40°F. Occasional hot muggy days occur during the summer months, but temperatures normally reach only the high 70's during the April-September period and average about 60°F at night. About 40 percent of K'un-ming's annual precipitation total of 42 inches falls in the form of late-afternoon thundershowers during July and August.

History

K'un-ming was founded in 1382 as a traditional Chinese walled city, although an earlier settlement at the approximate site had existed for many centuries. From its founding through the 19th century, the city was an isolated provincial capital and a

regionally important market and transport center. K'un-ming was an archetypal Chinese city characterized by congestion, dirt, and a maze of winding cul-de-sacs and crooked lanes lined with one- and two-storied wood and mud-brick buildings. Larger commercial shops fronted the main thoroughfares; small markets, workshops, and peddlers clogged the narrower streets and lanes. The residents of the city were provincial in outlook, a reflection of the area's isolation and distance from the East Coast. Except for its climatic amenities, K'un-ming probably was viewed as a hardship post by Chinese administrators sent there to govern the province.

Although the completion of the French Indochina Rail Line into K'un-ming in 1910 stimulated the city's commercial development, major changes and sizable growth did not take place until the Japanese invasion of China and the onset of World War II. The decision of the Chinese Nationalist Government to move the capital west to Ch'ung-ch'ing proved to be a great boon to Southwest China generally. East coast refugees streamed into the city carrying factories piecemeal from the eastern cities. Yunnanese from the surrounding agricultural countryside poured in to work in the numerous factories that were soon established. Over 300,000 people were added to K'un-ming during the war, and the city expanded outside its walls to the east, west, and south to accommodate its rapidly growing population. In addition to the added population and new construction, the impact of the 1937-45 period was also reflected in a dilution of the city's traditionalism and a gradual turn toward more progressive and modern attitudes.

Present-Day K'un-ming

Today, K'un-ming is undergoing rapid change, and its urban landscape has begun to take on the same appearance as that of other major Chinese cities. Industrial and commercial districts have been established, new wide streets and modern office buildings have been built, and new road and railroads now connect the city with its hinterland and other parts of China. Culturally, K'un-ming today is more diverse than in the past. Some of the East Coast war refugees and their descendants remain; numbers of minority peoples indigenous to Yunnan live in the city; and youthful workers sent in from other provinces further contribute to the mixture of peoples. Although Yunnan and K'un-ming are now much more tightly integrated into a strong central government than previously, the people retain a penchant for maverick political independence. Apparently this tendency, together with the area's distant location relative to the eastern cities, is one reason the city is not on the usual tourist circuit.

The K'un-ming urban area consists of three distinctive sections, differing in age, appearance, and function: the old city, representing K'un-ming's extent prior to World War II; a suburban area containing most of the wartime and post-war population expansion; and areas where the post-1949 industrial growth has taken place.

Change has perhaps been most evident in the old city. The ancient walls have been torn down and replaced with boulevards, leaving only an elevated promenade in the northeast sector. Old lanes and alleys are being obliterated in favor of straight, paved thoroughfares. The squat-wood and mud-brick buildings that lined the major streets are being replaced by five- and six-storied concrete buildings. Sewers and street lights have been installed and silver birch and crab apple trees planted along all the major roads. The streets, no longer full of peddlers' conveyances and shop people, are crowded with buses and trucks, and evidence of construction activity is widespread.

The southern half of the old city is today relatively uninteresting as any charm it may have possessed has since disappeared with modernization. New office and commercial buildings front recently widened and modernized streets, although old residential structures are still present along the remaining alleys away from the main thoroughfares. The northern part of the old city, devoted primarily to institutional and recreational use, is the most beautiful section of town. An excellent view of this area can be had from the remaining portion of the wall in the northeast where the elevated and tree-lined promenade passes over a small hill. From there, Ts'ui Hu (Green Lake) is visible, a large willow-lined lake with walkways, a temple, and gardened shores, nestling at the foot of Yuan-tung Hill. In the spring the hill is splashed with color from the blossoms of its peach, plum, and crab apple trees.

The old city retains its role as Yunnan's administrative, cultural, and marketing center. Many provincial government buildings are located on Wu-hua Shan (Five Flowers Hill) in the middle of the old city. The tree-lined campuses of the city's educational institutions -- including Yunnan University, K'un-ming Normal College, and the Institute for Nationalities -- are clustered near the northeast wall. Most of the city's larger government shops and stores, replacing the old marketplaces, are located along the new streets in the old city.

Surrounding the old city to the south, east, and west are modern suburbs that have sprung up in recent decades. While the old city reflects K'un-ming's history as an agrarian service center

and provincial capital, the suburbs reveal the impact of a western-style industrial culture. Old K'un-ming, although rapidly changing, remains compact and congested; the suburbs, on the other hand, are relatively sprawling with an area 2-1/2 times larger than the old city. The suburban streets are wide, straight, and lined with a mixture of new buildings, workers apartments, light industries, and warehouses.

K'un-ming residents are especially proud of their city's industrial development. From a former consumer city, it has become an important industrial city, producing a wide assortment of steel and other metal products, machinery, mining equipment, chemicals, motor vehicles, textiles, and many consumer items. The modern industries are located outside the city along all the major transportation arteries. The rail line heading southwest along Tien-ch'ih Lake has an extremely heavy concentration of industrial plants that produce brick, cement, chemicals, machinery, and electric power. In the morning and evening the roads leading out to the factories are clogged with buses and bicycles carrying people to and from their jobs.

Tourist Attractions

K'un-ming, a relatively new city, does not possess the rich historical and cultural heritage of some of China's older cities. With its commonplace, functional architecture, it has never been known as a beautiful city, especially since the onset of industrialization. While some cities are museums of China's past, K'un-ming is more a showcase of the present, an example of the kind of transformation that the government desires for all China. K'un-ming's industries and factories are its museums and are likely to be included on a visitor's itinerary.

The city does maintain a standard complement of parks and temples for the enjoyment of its citizens and visitors. Ts'ui Hu, for example, provides an island of quiet and beauty in the middle of a busy city. Ta-kuan Park, southwest of the city, has recently been enlarged, and the city zoo now has over 90 species of native animals. West of the city, the Chiung-chu Monastery is known for its 500 lifelike statues of Buddha's Chinese disciples. Several other temples are located on Five Flowers Hill in the middle of town, and additional monasteries or pagodas can be found around the city.

Two beautiful temples are located a short distance from K'un-ming. The Golden Temple sits on the summit of a small mountain 4 miles northeast of the city. The gates, pillars, and

roofs of the temple buildings are all highly ornamented and gilded with bronze. Perhaps the most beautiful and restful spot in the K'un-ming area is the Temple of the Western Hills located a short distance southwest of the city. A famous Ch'ing Dynasty mason spent 9 years cutting a long corridor with many niches and caves into the face of a rocky cliff. A Taoist Temple -- the Hall of the Taoist Trinity and its Dragon Gate -- is carved into the highest point of the cliff, overlooking the Tien-ch'ih. From the temple K'un-ming is visible in the distance, shining in a mist reflected from the lake.

Visitors who will be in K'un-ming for more than a day may be given a longer side trip to an area about 60 miles southeast of the city where an interesting geologic formation called the "Forest of Stones" is located. This large rock formation consists of miles of 60-90 feet high limestone towers and obelisks. From a distance, the area appears to be a stony forest, with each individual tower resembling a fir tree.